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HITCHIN RURAL DISTRICT COUNCIL

HEALTH
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ANNUAL REPORT

of the
MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH
for the year
1953

PUBLIC HEALTH OFFICIALS:

District Medical Officer of Health (and Divisional Medical
Officer for North Herts. Area):

VICTOR R. WALKER, M.B., Ch.B., B.Sc., D.P.H.

Divisional Health Office,
12 Brand Street, Hitchin.
(Telephone: Hitchin 1757)

Senior Sanitary Inspector and Cleansing Superintendent:

WILLIAM M. MATHEWS, Certs. S.I.E.J.B.,
Meat and Foods,
San. Science,
Smoke Inspection.

Additional Inspectors:

ROBERT B. BOLT, Certs. S.I.E.J.B.,
Testamur of Inst. of Public Cleansing.

LEONARD G. STRIBLEY, Certs. S.I.E.J.B.,
Meat and Foods.

Council Offices,
21 Bancroft, Hitchin.
(Telephone: Hitchin 1112-5)

Wm. E. Potter, Clerk to the Council.

To the Chairman and Members of the Hitchin Rural District Council

Ladies and Gentlemen,

On direction of Ministry of Health Circular 1/54 I present an annual report on the health and sanitary conditions of our district for the year 1953.

The official figures give a remarkable rise in live births (400 against 347 in 1952) with a reduction in local deaths from 257 to 225. Such figures give very favourable local birth and death rates, while application of the supplied comparability factor (for deaths) gives a standardised death rate of 9.1. A rather high total for stillbirths during the year is balanced by a low number of infant deaths in the district.

The reduction in the estimated population is probably due mainly to the boundary change at 31st March 1953.

The local incidence of serious infectious disease was again low and your main local health problem continues to be housing, complicated by the problem of disrepair of older properties.

I would again acknowledge having received from your chief officers every consideration and help during the year. In the compilation of the report I would acknowledge the help of your Senior Sanitary Inspector, Mr. W. M. Mathews, who is wholly responsible for the sections touching upon sanitary environment.

I am, Ladies and Gentlemen,
Your obedient servant,
V. R. WALKER
District Medical Officer of Health

May 1954.

SECTION A

LOCAL STATISTICS

2.

Area (in acres) (boundary changed at 1st April 1953)	81,324
Home Population - Registrar General's estimate for mid-1953 (constructed)	21,890
Number of inhabited houses at 1st April 1954 (estd.)	6,784
Rateable Value - 1st April 1954	£107,951
Sum represented by Penny Rate (estimate 1954/5)	£430

EXTRACTS FROM VITAL STATISTICS FOR THE YEAR 1953

	<u>Totals</u>	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>	HITCHIN RURAL DISTRICT	Comparable rates for England and Wales
<u>LIVE BIRTHS</u> { Legitimate	382	189	193		
{ Illegitimate	18	8	10		
{ All	400	197	203		

Rate per 1,000 of the estimated resident population	18.3	15.5
-----------------------------------------------------	------	------

	<u>Totals</u>	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>
<u>STILLBIRTHS</u> { Legitimate	15	9	6
{ Illegitimate	-	-	-
{ All	15	9	6

Rate per 1,000 total (live and still) births	36.1	22.4
----------------------------------------------	------	------

	<u>Totals</u>	<u>Male</u>	<u>Female</u>
<u>DEATHS</u>	225	133	92

Rate per 1,000 of the estimated resident population	10.3	11.4
-----------------------------------------------------	------	------

DEATH RATES OF INFANTS UNDER ONE YEAR OF AGE

All infants per 1,000 live births	15.0	26.8
Rate for Leg. infants per 1,000 leg. births	10.5	
Rate for Illeg. " " " illeg. "	111.1	

Actual number of such deaths (a) under 4 weeks and (b) totals under one year

Legitimate	4	4
Illegitimate	1	2
	<u>5</u>	<u>6</u>

3.

Deaths from Puerperal Causes	...	...	...	-
Deaths from Cancer (all sites)	...	...	...	45
Deaths from Measles ..	...	...	...	-
Deaths from Whooping Cough .	...	...	...	-
Deaths from other infective and parasitic diseases				-

Comment on Vital Statistics

The estimated local mid-year population (constructed on the district boundary change of March 1953) this year shows a reduction of 320 on the previous year.

The local birth rate of 18.3 is markedly higher than that for England and Wales (15.5) and the local figure for 1952 (15.6). The local death rate for the year (10.3) shows a fall and application of the supplied comparability factor of 0.88 gives a 'standardised' rate of 9.1.

While the local still birth rate exceeds the national figure the infant mortality rate is more favourable and the combined totals approximate closely to the national combined rate.

Principal Causes of Death

Of the total of 225 deaths, 89 were attributed to Heart or other Circulatory Diseases, 36 to Vascular Lesions of the Nervous Systems and 18 to Respiratory Diseases.

SECTION B

General Provision of Health Services

No important change occurred during the year.

SECTION C

Staff

Although demands upon the department continued to increase, the staff remained at the same level. The Inspectorial staff is given on the front page and the clerical duties were capably discharged by the Senior Clerk, Miss D. Bland, and one assistant. During the year changes were made in administrative and clerical responsibilities with the object of concentrating these duties to a greater extent upon the Senior Inspector and the Senior Clerk. The advantage gained was to leave one Additional Inspector more time for his outside duties, but further assistance was needed upon the clerical front. This help was found by apportioning certain duties to the Pupil Assistant, Mr. G. Allenby, and the arrangement has worked satisfactorily up to the present.

Sanitary Circumstances of the Area

Water Supplies

This last year has seen considerable progress made with the Council's Comprehensive Scheme. The laying of the mains is well advanced and these will shortly be in service. The construction of the water tower at Codicote has been completed, and the construction of the water tower at Rabley Heath is well advanced. The parish of Bygrave is now afforded a water supply from the Council's mains.

A further report has been received from the Council's Consulting Engineers, Messrs. D. Balfour & Sons, regarding the improvement of the supply in the Western and Southern areas of the district.

The water levels in the Council's boreholes throughout the district differ little from those of last year, and are not such as to cause undue concern. The purity of the water supplies has been maintained both at the pumping stations and at points of delivery throughout the district.

Two tables of analysis are submitted:-

1. Taken by the Council's Engineer & Surveyor to test the quality of the water delivered from the pumping stations into the mains.
2. Taken by the Public Health Department to test the quality of the water delivered to the consumer.

Table 1

Pumping Station	Total	Raw Water		Treated Water	
		Pass	Fail	Pass	Fail
Ashwell	4	4	-	-	-
Codicote	4	4	-	-	-
King's Walden	8	4	-	4	-
Peter's Green	8	4	-	4	-
Wymondley	4	4	-	-	-
Braughing		No record of any samples			
Totals	28	20	-	8	-

Langley Village - 4 all satisfactory - this supply to be discontinued February 1954.

5.

Table 2

<u>1. Council Undertakings</u>	<u>No. taken</u>	<u>Satis- factory</u>	<u>Unsatis- factory</u>	<u>Doubt- ful</u>
Offley-Lilley Scheme	3	3	-	-
Wymondley	4	4	-	-
<u>2. Private Undertakings</u>				
Hexton (Estate Co. supply)	2	2	-	-
<u>3. Other Sources</u>				
Special samples (private supplies)	49	29	20	-
	58	38	20	-

Sewerage and Sewage Disposal

The scheme for the sewerage of Offley village and the construction of a sewage treatment works is now well under way, and the Ministry have informed the Council that an Inspector will be visiting the area shortly to hold an enquiry into the scheme for the village of Holwell.

The detailed design of the scheme for Whitwell has been prepared by the Council's Consulting Engineers and it is understood that the Lea Conservancy Catchment Board have expressed their approval of the proposals.

Tenders for the flood relief sewer at Knebworth are being sought and the Ministry have awarded a starting date of the 1st July 1954 for this scheme.

It is hoped that in the near future the Hitchin Urban District Council will be able to proceed with the extension of their sewage works, thus enabling this Council to deal with the very bad conditions existing in the village of Ickleford.

Public Cleansing Service

Refuse Collection and Disposal

The comprehensive report dealing with this service received a careful consideration at a special Public Health Committee in January.

Considerable difficulties have manifested themselves particularly in connection with staff and vehicles, but the collection schedules have been maintained at all times. Credit is due to the Foreman and the men for this performance.

During the year, the Broadwater Tip was discontinued and Potters Heath Tip was brought into use as a replacement.

Some figures relating to the work performed appear below:-

<u>Year</u>	<u>No. of Loads</u>	<u>Approx. weight of all materials collected</u>	<u>Vehicle Mileage</u> (inc. Foreman's van)
1952	1822	3330 tons	47,314
1953	1947	3731 "	51,579

Cesspool and Night-soil Collections

The trouble experienced in earlier years with the time lag between the receipt of a request and the rendering of the service did not arise in 1953. The vehicles were usually able to give service in about three days. The longest period of waiting was ten days, and this provides favourable comparison with the waiting period of 1951 (six weeks) prior to the arrival of the second vehicle. Examination of statistics after one year's working using two vehicles showed that both vehicles were used for 82% of their available working hours. During slack periods, the more expensive vehicle (petrol driven) is stood down. It is interesting to note also that the second (diesel engined) vehicle has more than justified the Council's expectation of £100 per year economy on running costs. Efforts have been made to organise the cesspool emptying work in such a way as to release the maximum possible labour for refuse collection. This was done with the approval of the Public Health Committee, and the permission to use this labour in a dual capacity has been very valuable.

There appears overleaf a brief summary of work performed since 1948 -

7.

Year	<u>Houses in Private ownership</u>		<u>Council Houses</u>		<u>Loads From Sewage Works</u>	<u>Pails emptied</u>
	<u>Free</u>	<u>Chargeable</u>	<u>Free</u>	<u>Chargeable</u>		
1948	287	78	27	82	339	476($\frac{1}{2}$ yr.)
1949	308	126	32	206 (inc. 148 Hinx.)	329	2641
1950	395	201	25	59	409	3765
1951	411)	200)	26	47	425	4221
	22) Hired veh.	3)				
1952						
(Old veh.)	315	169	10	31	466	2947
(New veh.)	156	86	18	30	262	1347
1953						
(Old veh.)	196	102	7	29	233	1812
(New veh.)	343	186	20	122	314	2533

Salvage

Not for the first time, salvage once more proved a great disappointment, there being a big fall in value during the year. The position finally arrived whereby it was impossible to sell the materials at all and collections fell to a low level whilst indoor storage was being practised. The end of the year saw the expected improvement materialise and a happy note was struck when the department was fortunate enough to be offered a contract outlet for salvage by a reputable firm. Although these despatches could not start before January 1st 1954, the contract will enable all accumulated stocks to be sold at a satisfactory price. The great advantage of such a contract is that the firm offer the best price in the country and even under conditions of depression, usually they will accept about two-thirds of a Council's collections.

Year

1948	-	64 tons collected and sold	-	income	£269. 7. 0d.
1949	-	53 $\frac{3}{4}$ " " " "	-	"	£180. 2. 6d.
1950	-	39 " " " "	-	"	£131. 6. 2d.
1951	-	56 " " " "	-	"	£837.11. 9d.
1952	-	35 " " " "	-	"	£346.13. 1d.
1953	-	22 " " " "	-	"	£119.17. 1d.

Prevention of Damage by Pests Act 1949

During the year, the experimental work using the new rodenticide "Warfarin" was continued and results were so encouraging that a report was made to the Public Health Committee.

Briefly, this report outlined a new system of working which enabled two different sets of properties to be treated in one week, using the existing one man and one vehicle. The result of this was to increase greatly the amount of effective work done and to enable time to be devoted to agricultural inspections, a thing which had tended to be neglected. A register of the agricultural holdings is being built up, containing details of all inspections made. Simultaneously a good liaison exists between the County A.E.C. and the department, so that farms having contracts with the A.E.C. are omitted from the operative's inspection routine, and those not enjoying a contract can be referred to them, where necessary, with a view to one being obtained. Before visiting farm premises a letter is sent intimating that the inspection is to be carried out, asking for the kind co-operation of the occupier and undertaking to disinfect boots etc. if desired. This technique has proved to be acceptable to the farming fraternity, who have given every assistance in facilitating the inspections, and to whom much appreciation is due.

The condition of the Council tips and sewage disposal works has given similar cause for satisfaction. Although these obligations take up much time, the results have been gratifying, and it is true to say that from a rodent control standpoint their condition has been improved greatly in recent times.

In addition to that outlined in Paragraph 1, a further economy has been made by reducing the proportion of time devoted to bait handling and other supplementary duties. This amounted to about one hour in every 5.2 hours in 1950, but has been reduced to 1 in 6.7 hours for 1953. Taken over a year, this represents an appreciable saving of man-hours which can thus be devoted to outside duties.

The following table summarises the total work done under the Joint Scheme -

HITCHIN & WELWYN RURAL AND ROYSTON URBAN DISTRICT COUNCILS
JOINT PESTS CONTROL SCHEME

9.

SUMMARY

JANUARY 1st to DECEMBER 31st 1953

DISTRICT	N U M B E R O F H O U R S W O R K E D						TOTAL
	SEWERS	TIPS ETC.	PRIVATE DWELLINGS	BUS. PREMS.	BLOCK INSP.	INSP. OF AGRIC. LAND	
HITCHIN R.D.C.	90 $\frac{3}{4}$	467 $\frac{1}{4}$	501	71 $\frac{3}{4}$	28 $\frac{1}{4}$	185	1344
WELWYN R.D.C.	17 $\frac{3}{4}$	106 $\frac{3}{4}$	111 $\frac{3}{4}$	12 $\frac{1}{4}$	6	43 $\frac{3}{4}$	298 $\frac{1}{4}$
ROYSTON U.D.C.	46	83	56 $\frac{1}{4}$	6 $\frac{1}{4}$	3 $\frac{3}{4}$	16 $\frac{3}{4}$	212
	154 $\frac{1}{2}$	657	669	90 $\frac{1}{4}$	38	245 $\frac{1}{2}$	1854 $\frac{1}{4}$
Other figures -	Time spent on vehicle maint., receiving instructions, reports on visits, bait handling etc.						327 $\frac{3}{4}$
Total mileage covered by vehicle	- 8408						
Petrol used	- 250 gals.						
Approx. miles per gal.	- 33.63	Total hours worked					2182

Civil Defence

Reference was made in the 1952 report to the fact that Civil Defence was constantly relegated to the background in favour of more pressing day-to-day commitments. In September 1953 the Council called for the completion of the Emergency Feeding Plan for the district as an urgent matter, and routine duties were extensively suspended for the nine weeks necessary to perform this work.

A Plan was formulated and despatched to the County Authority in accordance with the Council's wish.

SECTION DHousing

At December 31st 1953 the number of applications on the Council's waiting list for housing accommodation was 1179 - a decrease of two only over the previous year. During 1953, 200 new applications were registered and 202 deleted from the lists, the applicants in most cases having been re-housed.

The Council have pursued and intensified the policy of transferring families from one type of house to another of more suitable size. Elderly couples and people living alone in three-bedroom houses have been re-housed in bungalows, thus making available the houses for larger families, and so making the best use of all accommodation.

A number of the additional bungalows and houses now being built at Wymondley have been allocated to applicants living in the Nissen Huts at St. Ibbs Camp and to other urgent cases from surrounding parishes in which it has not been possible to build new houses.

The figures for the year ended December 31st 1953 are as follows:-

No. of new permanent dwellings
completed by the Council 103

No. of new permanent dwellings
completed by private enterprise 52

Total .. 155

Caravans

The work of keeping up to date with caravans takes an appreciable amount of the Inspectors' time. During the year a number of vans were removed from the records as they were on land transferred to Stevenage. A new private enterprise site was opened at Potters Heath, and at the year's end there were 85 vans accounted for, of which 27 existed on the two organised sites.

SECTION EInspection and Supervision of Food

The work upon the inspection of the food premises continues slowly. The response to progressive suggestions has been good, particularly from the Brewery Companies, and although work is proceeding satisfactorily, one could wish for speedier completion of works of compliance.

(a) Milk

The department was called in several times to investigate alleged shortcomings in the district's milk supply. Generally speaking, investigations were hampered by failure on the part of complainants to notify promptly and to preserve the evidence. However, interviews with several milk purveyors produced improvements although the bulk handling of milk still leaves much to be desired.

The results of 64 samples taken in the area appear below:-

Sampling Authority	Designated and School Milks		Non-Designated milks		Tubercule Bacilli		
	<u>Passed</u>	<u>Failed</u>	<u>Passed</u>	<u>Failed</u>	<u>Pos.</u>	<u>Neg.</u>	<u>No Result</u>
Herts. County Council	44	4	-	-	-	-	-
Other Authorities	11	-	-	-	-	-	-
Hitchin Rural Dist. Council	3	2	-	-	-	-	-
	58	6	-	-	-	-	-

13.

During the year thirteen Dealer's Licences were issued in respect of the sale of Designated milks from eight premises in the district, and eighteen Supplementary Licences were granted to eleven firms retailing Designated milks in the district from premises situated elsewhere.

(b) Inspection of meat and other foods

This routine work continues. The details appear below of materials condemned as unfit for human consumption and destroyed either on the site or at the Council's tips -

	<u>Cwts.</u>	<u>Qtrs.</u>	<u>Lbs.</u>	<u>Ozs.</u>
Tinned Food	1	-	3	13
Pig Carcase	-	-	14	-
Beef	-	1	22	-
	<hr/> 1	<hr/> 2	<hr/> 11	<hr/> 13

The number of premises in the district registered under Section 14 of the Food & Drugs Act 1938 for the Sale of Ice-Cream is 56, and for the Preparation or Manufacture of Preserved food etc. 34, of which 5 are not now in active use.

(c) Food Poisoning

Of the three notified cases of food poisoning, all were found to be due to 'salmonella typhi-murium' (see report on Page 15).

(d) Factories Acts 1937 and 1948

An abstract from the Report submitted to the Ministry of Labour and National Service on Form 572 is given herewith -

1. Inspections for purposes of provisions as to health
(including inspections made by Sanitary Inspectors)

Premises	No. on Reg- ister	Number of -		
		Inspec- tions	Written Notices	Occupiers Prosecuted
(i) Factories in which Secs.1,2,3,4 and 6 are to be enforced by the Local Auth.	21	-	-	-
(ii) Factories not inc. in (i) in which Sec.7 is enforced by the Local Authority.	86	71	5	-
(iii) Other prems. in which Sec.7 is enforced by the Local Authority (excl. Outworkers)	-	-	-	-
Total	107	71	5	-

2. Cases in which Defects were found

Particulars	No. of cases in which defects found				No. of Prosec- utions
	Found	Remedied	To H.M. Inspec.	By H.M. Inspec.	
Want of cleanliness	5	5	-	-	-
Overcrowding	-	-	-	-	-
Unreasonable temp.	-	-	-	-	-
Inadequate ventilation	-	-	-	-	-
Ineffective drainage of floors	-	-	-	-	-
Sanitary Conveniences					
(a) Insufficient	2	1	-	-	-
(b) Unsuitable or defective	2	2	-	-	-
(c) Not separate for sexes	-	-	-	-	-
Other offences against the Act	-	-	-	-	-
Total	9	8	-	-	-

Outworkers. There are 31 Outworkers reported in the district.

SECTION FPrevalence of and Control over, Infectious and other Diseases

For the year local notifications of acute infectious diseases (after correction) were: Measles - 213, Whooping cough - 46, Scarlet fever - 8, Acute poliomyelitis - 3 (all paralytic), Erysipelas - 2, Acute pneumonia - 2, Puerperal pyrexia - 2, Acute hepatitis - 1 and Food Poisoning - 3.

Measles was epidemic throughout most of the district in the first quarter of the year; Whooping Cough was sporadic in time and distribution with a rather greater frequency in the fourth quarter. Scarlet Fever cases were both few and scattered and of mild case severity; apart from its occurrence in childrens' institutions, this disease continues to show a very low degree of infectivity.

Acute Poliomyelitis cases were confined to the third quarter and of the three paralytic cases (two adult and one child) one adult case had a late revision of diagnosis to another disease. There was no traceable connection between cases, each being sporadic. Each case is the subject of confidential report for the national investigation conducted by the Medical Research Council.

All three notified cases of food poisoning were due to infection by 'salmonella typhi-murium'. One single case in the second quarter (at Hexton) had no traceable source of infection but two cases in one family in the fourth quarter (at Offley) were almost certainly caused by cooked meat prepared in an adjoining district, where other cases occurred at the same point in time. In one adult the illness was severe and clinically of a paratyphoid nature.

Diphtheria was absent from the district during the year. Despite local continued rarity of the disease, the offer of infant protection by immunisation continues to be accepted by a high proportion of parents.

TUBERCULOSISNew Cases and Deaths during the year 1953

Age Periods	New Cases				Deaths			
	Respiratory		Non-Respiratory		Respiratory		Non-Respiratory	
	M.	F.	M.	F.	M.	F.	M.	F.
0 - 1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1 - 5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
5 - 15	1(1)	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
15 - 25	5(3)	1(1)	2	-	-	-	-	-
25 - 35	1	2(2)	-	-	-	-	-	-
35 - 45	3(1)	1(1)	-	-	-	-	-	-
45 - 55	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
55 - 65	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
and over	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Totals	10(5)	4(4)	2	-	-	-	-	-

Deaths allocated by Registrar General
after final transfers

- - - -

Footnote. Figures for new cases include inward transfers from residence in other areas, which figure is also indicated separately in brackets.

Comment. It will be seen that locally notified new cases are remarkably few for the year, totalling 7 against 17 in 1952. There were no deaths allocated to the whole district during the year against the figure of 6 in 1952. Such nil return is almost certainly an all-time record for the district.

Supplementary Information

In accordance with the request contained in Ministry of Health Circular 1/54, the following brief details are given relating to the Committees of the Council who deal respectively with the various matters which influence the health of the district:-

Public Health Committee: All public health matters, water supply, sewerage, caravans, rodent control, refuse collection, cesspool emptying etc.

Housing & Town Planning Committee: New housing and Council housing policy and administration. Old housing, demolition orders, improvement grants etc.

Establishment Committee: Staff.

Finance & General Purposes Committee: Petroleum control.

VICTOR R. WALKER
District Medical Officer
of Health

May 1954.